News release

Weather in the oceans

1 March 2005

Marine experts from around the UK have pooled their knowledge on how the world's ocean systems work, to launch the National Centre for Ocean Forecasting (NCOF). This centre of excellence, forecasting the 'weather in the oceans' will open in Exeter, Devon on 4 March 2005.

NCOF is a collaboration between the Met Office, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, Southampton Oceanography Centre and the Environmental Systems Science Centre.

Oceans cover three quarters of the world's surface, and in setting up NCOF at the Met Office's headquarters, the aim is to establish ocean forecasting as part of our national infrastructure of marine services. The centre will co-ordinate the nation's ocean forecasting activities, building on world-class research and development that is already well established in the UK. The plan is to provide as much information on the conditions in the oceans as is currently available about the weather.

The focus of NCOF will be short-range (5-10 days) predictions of surface waves, storm surges, sea ice, ocean temperatures, salinities and currents and ocean ecosystems for both the deep ocean and shelf and coastal seas. The predictions will be used to provide support for oil slick responses, search and rescue, defence, management of water quality, ecosystems and fisheries, wind farms, oil exploration, responses to coastal flooding, safety of shipping and improved weather forecasts.

Dr Mike Bell, Head of the National Centre for Ocean Forecasting, said: "The creation of the NCOF is a fantastic opportunity to bring together marine expertise from across the UK. Through the collaboration of the work of the NCOF partners, this broad base of marine science will be a powerful tool to help improve understanding of the marine environment."

More about NCOF

NCOF web site

Notes:

The Met Office is the national meteorological service for the UK. It is a world leader in the supply of data, advice and services to help mitigate the effects of weather, climate and other environmental factors.

Southampton Oceanography Centre (SOC) is a joint venture between the University of Southampton and the Natural Environment Research Council. It is one of the world's leading centres of excellence devoted to research, teaching, technology development and provision of infrastructure in ocean and earth sciences. From 1 May 2005 it will be known as the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton.

The Environmental Systems Science Centre (ESSC) is one of the Natural Environment Research Council's collaborative research centres. Based at the University of Reading, ESSC is concerned with improving our understanding of the environment. It has vast expertise in Earth observation and plays a leading role in many national and international programmes.

The Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) carries out fundamental, core strategic and applied research of a world-class standard. It has a mission to contribute to the issues of climate change, marine pollution and sustainability - topics that are of national and worldwide importance. It is one of NERC's independent collaborative centres.

The Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory is a leading world centre in tidal prediction (with related interests in earth tides and storm surges) and a leading European centre in modelling and forecasting shelf sea dynamics. It is one of NERC's research centres.

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is one of the UK's seven Research Councils. It uses a budget of about £300 million a year to fund and carry out impartial scientific research in the sciences of the environment. NERC trains the next generation of independent environmental scientists. It is addressing some of the key questions facing mankind such as global warming, renewable energy and sustainable economic development.

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